

**Advisory Group’s contribution to the High Level International
Conference on the International Decade for Action “Water for
Sustainable Development”, 2018 -2028**

20 – 22 June, 2018, Dushanbe, Tajikistan



*Advisory Group of the National Water Resources Committee, Myanmar
(AG of NWRC)*

*Your Excellences,
Esteemed Heads of Delegation, UN Ambassadors, all Dignitaries Present,
Distinguished Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

Good Afternoon!

It is a great honor for me to contribute to this important gathering at the onset of the Water for Sustainable Development (WSD) Action Decade. My name is Khin Ni Ni Thein, Secretary of the Advisory Group (AG) of the National Water Resources Committee (NWRC) in Myanmar. I understand that we have very limited time allocation. Therefore, I will not explain about the country’s background and go to the actions directly.

Myanmar is blessed in natural resources and especially endowed with abundant fresh water resources, of which less than 5% is used annually at present. Historically, we come from a traditional water management setting, whereby each Ministry developed water resources within its own mandate and manpower. It can be said that the past water resources management approach has been a non-integrated and silo approach, which lacked integration and did not look at the bigger picture, let alone practiced a holistic water budget allocation, planning, development and management. As a consequence, low water use efficiency of agricultural, industrial, urban domestic, rural domestic and energy sectors historically contributes to low GDP, resulting in low development. From the water cycle perspective, inter-seasonal storage is insignificant, investment in the water sector is mostly by the government and funds have been limited.

Currently, water management responsibilities are distributed across many agencies. There are both overlaps and gaps. Overlaps induce unnecessary conflicts and disputes among concerned agencies and gaps cause unbalanced economic growth which has led to damaging the water cycle. Disturbing the water cycle means killing the economy and sustainability of the nation, which can eventually escalate into lack of water and lack of resilience to floods and droughts.

To address this situation, not so long ago, the National Water Resources Committee (NWRC) was established by Presidential Decree - to provide high-level leadership focused on good water governance, and on creating an enabling environment to implement IWRM in Myanmar. This APEX body in the Myanmar Water domain is chaired by the Vice President II and cuts across sectors as the Union Ministers from all key water related Ministries are high level members of the NWRC. Furthermore, representative Ministers of the 14 regions and states of Myanmar are member of the NWRC. Careful choice of the focal Ministry criterion is that of a non-water-user Ministry. Hence the Ministry of Transport and Communication (MOTC) has been appointed as a focal. The APEX body provides coordinated policy directions and science-based decision making, utilizing an evidence-based Decision Support System (DSS). It is the basis for integration and coordination to manage the broad inter-related opportunities and risks of Myanmar's water resources at different levels, and for recommending water-based development pathways for the country.

To support the NWRC with scientific and technical expertise, to bridge the gap of understanding between government agencies and non-state actors, and to help broker the funds and crack into international water diplomacy, the non-governmental Advisory Group was established by the Presidential decree.

These developments are part of Myanmar's water sector reform, which is taking place in cooperation with many valued development partners. In the light of Myanmar's high ambition to further develop the country's water resources for hydropower, irrigation, navigation, fisheries, flood management and other uses, we quickly filled the gap in lack of practice in implementing Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) approach. Our first step was to create an enabling environment for the good water governance in Myanmar. We have enacted National Environmental Law, Rivers Conservation Law, National Water Policy and Myanmar National Water Framework Directive. Drinking water standard has been finalized and applied. To control the water pollution by waste water disposal, we have set up effluent standards as a work-in-progress. Myanmar also has National Disaster Management Committee chaired by the Vice President II, where the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement is the focal Ministry; and the

National-Level Environmental Conservation and Climate Change Central Committee (NE5C) is chaired by the Vice President (1), where MONREC is the focal Ministry. We also have established the country level Integrated Flood Management platform with the collaboration between four key departments under three key NWRC member Ministries.

Fully aware that societal integration is an important pillar of IWRM, we have extended our efforts beyond sectorial and institutional integration to embrace the valuable contributions of non-State actors – civil society, academia and the private sector – to jointly achieve the sustainable use, management and safeguarding of water resources, both surface water and groundwater. From such arrangements and new initiatives and institutional settings, it becomes very obvious that Myanmar water stakeholders are doing its utmost in improving water governance and promoting IWRM.

Dear Water Colleagues and Friends,

It is needless to say that water resources management is a key to development, social and gender equity and environmental sustainability. The Climate Change impacts are shown in water sector in the forms of extreme weather situation, floods, droughts, tsunamis, landslides, etc., at the same time, it is widely acknowledged that *proper water resources management is the best adaptation practice to combat climate change!*

As host of the 3rd Asia Pacific Water Summit in December last year, Myanmar contributes to the regional cooperation, South-South cooperation and implementation of the global water and development agenda. We are very committed to promote the implementation of Yangon Declaration with the support of our development partners and research partners as well as the private sector. Keeping this momentum, we are fully prepared to take up a role in International Decade “Water for Sustainable Development (2018-2028)” as part of Myanmar’s endeavor to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

In the 3rd Asia Pacific Water Summit, Myanmar has initiated three important topics; (i) reviving the water cycle by taking care of rainwater harvesting and groundwater sustainability, (ii) water-energy-food-ecosystem nexus, and (iii) water-based economy.

If we talk about **water-based economy**, the equitable and sustainable development and management of Myanmar’s water resources is a prerequisite in achieving economic growth, poverty alleviation, sustaining ecosystem and its services, and national and regional integration as well as reconciliation among many diverse ethnic groups. It is crucial that water resources are developed and managed wisely with holistic approach. So that major environmental degradation seen in other countries can be avoided and Myanmar can keep its water cycle vibrant and sustainable. This requires the

implementation of IWRM, relevant capacity building, coordinated water resources planning at the national, basin and local levels, and integration of all costs and benefits in the planning approach – and above all is social inclusiveness, which can pay off with the highest prize “Trust” among stakeholders.

The 3rd APWS aimed to promoting cooperation and partnership, as well as sharing knowledge and experiences to enhance water security in the region towards concrete actions and solutions for sustainable development. This marks the beginning of a regional endeavor to take a leading role in the implementation of the International Decade for Action, “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018-2028.

H.E. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, State Counsellor of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, addressed the Third Asia Pacific Water Summit (3rd APWS) held in Dec 2017. [Ref.: <http://www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com/welcoming-opening-remarks-h-e-daw-aung-san-suu-kyi-state-counsellor-republic-union-myanmar-opening-ceremony-3rd-apws/>]. The State Counsellor said that ***“The convening of this event (3rd APWS) is most timely as the 72nd United Nations General Assembly recently decided to proclaim the period 2018 to 2028 the International Decade for Action, “Water for Sustainable Development”. The aim of this Decade is to emphasize the sustainable development, and integrated management, of water resources, and to strengthen cooperation and partnership at all levels, with a view to promoting the speedy achievement of internationally agreed water-related goals and targets. This event provides an excellent opportunity for sharing our visions, and our views on the future implementation of the “Water for Sustainable Development” Decade. I hope that the Summit will also provide a platform where our partners in the Asia and Pacific Region can share their experiences of water-related enterprises and together conceive better ideas for integrated water resources management.”*** The importance of the role of water in sustainable development by saying, ***“It is clear that water is the main driver of sustainable development. The National Water Resources Committee is responsible for two highly important tasks, water-based economy transformation, and water related disaster risks reduction in complete cycle; the National Disaster Management Committee takes care of the relief and resettlement parts of emergency situations during floods and droughts. The NWRC has three pillars, the Secretariat, the Advisory Group and the Hydro-Informatics Centre (HIC). The Government, Corporate, Society (GCS) partnership offers considerable opportunities for water-based enterprises. We will promote GCS partnership within the framework of Integrated Water Resources Management in Myanmar. Our Government continues to provide better security, and to develop the necessary policy and legal framework for water-related investments to flourish in this country. I would like to invite potential investors, both domestic and international, to engage with the NWRC and the NDMC on how best they might participate in and benefit from, the water sector enterprises of our country.”***

Yangon Declaration stated that ***“We envision the Pathway Forward to upscale innovation for water security in the Asia-Pacific region and are determined to: Sound water cycle management; Governance and inclusive development; Financing the implementation of water-related Sustainable Development Goals; and Water cooperation at all levels. Myanmar water***

stakeholders are very committed to SDG (6) and (17) in order to expand our multi-layered cooperation to Global Processes, making partnerships and sharing responsibilities.

Last but not least, I would like to *express* our heartfelt appreciation to the Government of Tajikistan, the gracious host of the High-Level International Conference on the International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018 – 2028, and all organizers who worked very hard and very long to make this important event possible and for the warm welcome and generous hospitality extended to all participants.

Thank You.

Prof. Dr. Khin Ni Ni Thein

Secretary of Advisory Group (AG) and

Member of the National Water Resources Committee (NWRC)

aiweb.lead@gmail.com

+95-95 11 18 80